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Farm Labor

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FARM EMPLOYMENT DECLINE CONTINUES

WAGE RATE AVERAGES RISE SLIGHTLY IN 1961

Farm work was near the low point of the year during the farm labor survey week of December 24-30. The estimated number of persons working on farms that week totaled 5.1 million. Of this number nearly 4.2 million were members of farm families. Hired farm workers were estimated at slightly over .9 million. Compared with a year earlier the total number of workers was down almost 3 percent. Family workers were less numerous by 3 percent. The December survey week again found a much smaller number of hired workers than in previous months but exceeded the 1960 period by 1 percent.

Christmas holiday preparations and some time out for family visits ranked high in importance on the farm time schedule toward the end of a generally successful year. Snow and severe winter weather dominated large areas of the northern and central parts of the Nation, limiting the work of finishing remnants of crop harvests. Winter severity, however, increased livestock care on many farms. The greatest field activity during the week was in parts of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona where weather allowed considerable progress in cleaning up the cotton harvest. In Pacific Coast States considerable farm and ranch work was in progress. Fruit tree pruning was active and California vegetable and citrus fruit harvests continued. Field work was greatly restricted in South Central areas because of wet fields left by heavy rains earlier in the month. In Eastern States freezing weather drove deeply into the South, reducing field work generally. Some freeze damage was reported and crop movement reduced in some Florida winter vegetable sections. Citrus movement to processors increased.

1961 Annual Average Employment Reaches New Low.

Monthly and annual estimates of employment by States and for the United States for 1961 are given on pages 7-11. The United States annual average of total farm employment reached a record low of 7.0 million. This was a decrease of 2 percent from the previous low of 1960. Farm family employment decreased slightly in all geographic regions and in most States.

Hired farm employment for monthly survey weeks during 1961 averaged 1.9 million workers or about 1 percent above the similar average for 1960. This

increase, although slight, is the first since 1958. Increases in average hired employment were limited mainly to Southern States. Increased cotton acreage in 1961 and changed timing of some jobs due to weather influence may have been responsible for the slight increases estimated. Machines and farm workers generally were in good supply for the work at hand when weather favored high employment.

Farm Wage Rates Rise Slightly

January 1962 farm wage rates showed slight but consistent increases over a year earlier. The U. S. composite rate per hour of 93.2 cents edged about 3 percent above the 1961 average of 90.9 cents. The index of the composite rate, seasonally adjusted, was 652 percent of the 1910-14 base. Compared with 1957-59, the composite rate was up 12 percent. Rates for regular workers hired by the month were about 2 percent over a year earlier, with workers furnished house averaging \$200 per month, a new high average for this hiring arrangement.

Average wage rates for the year 1961 showed slight but consistent gains, except for daily rates, which remained at 1960 levels. The U. S. composite rate per hour at 83.4 cents was 2 percent above the 1960 average of 81.8 cents. The index of the composite hourly rate rose to 642 percent of the 1910-14 base. Converted to a 1957-59 base, the index of 1961 average composite hourly rates was 110. All wage rates reported represent cash rates exclusive of values of other items furnished.

B A S I S O F E S T I M A T E SFarm Employment

Farm employment estimates of the Statistical Reporting Service include all persons considered working on farms during specified periods, as follows:

(1) Farm family workers

- (a) Farm operators who do any farm work or chores on or for their farms during the designated survey week.
- (b) Other members of the farm operator's family or household who worked 15 hours or more on the farm during the survey week without receiving cash wages, not counting housework. In sharecropper areas, croppers and members of their families are considered family workers when working their own crops, but as hired workers if earning cash wages during the survey week.

(2) Hired farm workers

Persons doing farm work for pay during the survey week. Members of the operator's family receiving cash wages for work on their farms are classed as hired workers.

Farm Wage Rates

Farm wage rates, published quarterly by the Statistical Reporting Service, are based on farmers' reports of average farm wage rates paid in their localities. Rates for different wage arrangements are reported. Composite rates per hour are derived by computing a weighted average of all rates. Piece rates for farm work are not reported because of the great diversity of kinds of rates involved. In conversion to composite hourly rates, however, weights for rates per hour without board or room, are increased to allow for piece rate work. This assumes that piece rates and hourly rates are approximately equivalent. Wage rates relate to cash wages only, exclusive of value of any perquisites furnished such as house, room, or meals.

Source of Data

A Nationwide sample of from 20,000 to 25,000 reports from farm operators representing many localities in each State provides monthly reports on farm employment on these farms and quarterly reports on farm wages. Data from Censuses of Agriculture and Population and enumerative sample surveys are important in determining the overall levels of employment estimates. Annual and seasonal changes involve estimates of changes in the number of farms and other factors determining farm work requirements.

The SRS farm employment estimates differ from those in the Monthly Report on the Labor Force (MRLF), published by the Department of Labor, owing to differences in definition, method, and survey timing. The MRLF data come from interviews in about 35,000 households, both nonfarm and farm, in a sampling pattern designed for National estimates of the labor force. All persons 14 years old or over in the civilian non-institutional population are considered. This report excludes from farm totals all children below 14 years of age and persons who do some farm work but mostly nonfarm. Included as farm workers by MRLF but not by SRS are some persons on farms such as typists, bookkeepers, and certain agricultural processors, and also farm operators doing no work during the survey period but who have no other job.

The SRS basic data come from the farm operator on the monthly general farm report for his farm and locality (a mailed questionnaire). He reports the number of persons working on his farm during the survey week regardless of age or other employment. Census of Agriculture and other bench mark data used by SRS involve duplication of workers who are counted on more than one farm. The MRLF report covers the week ending nearest the 15th; the SRS report, the last full calendar week ending at least one day before the end of the month. Both surveys are subject to sampling variation.

Farm employment and indexes, December 1961, with comparisons, United States

	: Annual : average : 1961	: Annual : average : 1960	: Annual : average : 1956-60	: December : average : 1/1955-59	: December : average : 1960	: December : average : 24-30 : 1961
FARM EMPLOYMENT						
(Thousands)						
Total	6,990	7,118	7,485	5,576	5,206	5,071
Family labor ...	5,104	5,249	5,572	4,627	4,285	4,142
Hired labor	1,886	1,869	1,913	949	921	929
INDEXES 2/						
(1910-14=100)						
Total	52	52	55	58	54	53
Family labor ...	50	52	55	57	53	51
Hired labor	55	55	56	62	60	61
(1957-59=100)						
Total	94	94	99	105	98	96
Family labor ...	91	95	100	104	97	93
Hired labor	96	96	98	108	105	107

1/ Employment during the last full calendar week ending at least one day before the end of the month.

2/ Monthly indexes are adjusted for seasonal variation.

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Farm Wage Rates and Indexes, January 1, 1962, United States

	: Annual : average : 1961	: January : average : 1956-60	: January : average : 1961	: January 1, : 1962
FARM WAGE RATES				
Composite rate per hour 1/	\$ 0.834	\$ 0.818	\$ 0.909	\$ 0.932
Per month with house	\$195.00	\$174.00	\$197.00	\$200.00
Per month with board and room ...	151.00	139.00	155.00	158.00
Per week with board and room	35.75	32.50	34.75	35.75
Per week without board or room...	46.50	42.00	46.75	47.75
Per day with house	5.30	4.95	5.40	5.60
Per day with board and room	6.50	5.80	6.40	6.40
Per day without board or room ...	6.60	6.00	6.60	6.70
Per hour with house90	.74	.83	.85
Per hour without board or room...	.99	.98	1.08	1.11
INDEXES 2/				
(1910-14=100)	642	577	635	652
(1957-59=100)	110	99	109	112

1/ Weighted average of all rates on a per hour basis.

2/ Indexes are adjusted for seasonal variation.

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